

# BECOME A SMART HOME ENVIRONMENTALIST

The City of San Diego Household Hazardous Materials Program

## Common Sense Improves Home Environment

**B**ecome a smart “home environmentalist!” Just adopt a few common sense guidelines for buying, using, storing and disposing of household hazardous materials. This fact sheet tells you how. It’s just one in a series from the City of San Diego Household Hazardous Materials Program.

Chemicals contained in many common household products, such as cleaners, paint and pesticides can be handled safely and used effectively. However, when they aren’t used, stored or thrown away properly, they can cause illness and injury to your family and pollute the environment. Many safer alternative products are available.

By following some simple guidelines, San Diegans are keeping **almost half a million pounds** of household hazardous wastes out of our landfills, sewers and storm drains every year!

## What Are Household Hazardous Materials?

**H**azardous products are those labeled with DANGER, WARNING, CAUTION, POISON, TOXIC, FLAMMABLE, CORROSIVE, REACTIVE, EXPLOSIVE or similar words. Such materials can add convenience to our lifestyle and make work easier. They come in many forms and include products such as cleaners, automotive products, paints, solvents and pesticides. You can protect yourself and your family by carefully reading and following label directions.

Household hazardous **wastes** are leftovers of these products. You can limit this waste by choosing the right products and buying only the amounts you need. Then, what little may be left over can be disposed of properly at citywide household hazardous waste collection events held throughout the city of San Diego.



## Be A Smart Shopper

**S**tart by buying smart! At the supermarket or home improvement store, the following guidelines can help you shop:

- Choose the least toxic products available. To select a safer substitute, read labels, look for warning words and check the ingredients. For instance, products labeled CAUTION need to be chosen over those labeled WARNING;

which, in turn, need to be selected before those indicating DANGER.

- Buy one product that will accomplish **many** tasks, instead of a separate cleaner for every household chore. This reduces the cleaning budget, the need for storage space and the amount of leftover products.



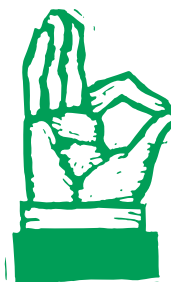
- Generally, water-based products are safer for the environment than petroleum-based items (e.g., water-based paints and degreasers).
- Avoid aerosol sprays that may contain chemicals harmful to the environment or contents under pressure that may be flammable. Choose pump sprays instead.
- Buy **only as much as you need** and will be able to use in a reasonable amount of time. This reduces the space needed for storage, the potential for spills or fires, and the need to use expensive disposal methods.

## Be A Smart Consumer

**F**ollow label instructions. They are provided for your safety.

- Protect yourself with appropriate gloves, masks and other safety gear, when applicable.
- Provide proper ventilation by opening doors and windows and using a fan when materials that generate fumes, such as varnish and paint thinner, are used.
- Keep cleaning products containing chlorine separate from ammonia or acid-based cleaners. Mixing them produces a toxic gas.
- Put out pilot lights before using combustible and flammable materials near appliances. Pilot lights can ignite fumes, causing an explosion and fire.
- Store materials properly. Keep them in original containers, tightly sealed and upright. Store them away from food products and out of the reach of children.

- Check storage areas at least twice a year and properly dispose of products that have outlived their usefulness. Remove leaking or damaged containers, but don’t combine different products. Keep the area clean and free from trash.



Be Smart About Disposal

Household hazardous wastes are leftover or unused products containing hazardous chemicals. Improper disposal of hazardous wastes produces a very real threat to individuals and the environment. Hazardous wastes poured down a drain or into a sewer can reach and damage precious waterways, including the ocean. Hazardous wastes discarded in the trash can harm refuse collectors and cause landfill and ground water pollution - and it's against the law!



Changing your buying habits makes an environmental difference. By buying in limited quantities — and using the product up — you reduce the need for hazardous waste disposal. Some hazardous wastes such as water-based paints, auto batteries, used motor oil and antifreeze, can be recycled. (Recycled latex paint is even used for community graffiti removal programs in San Diego.)

Take household hazardous wastes including paints, solvents, varnishes, acids, flammables, acrylics and resins to a citywide household hazardous waste collection event. Household haz-

ardous wastes not eligible for collection events are asbestos, compressed gas cylinders, explosives (such as flares and ammunition), radioactive materials, PCBs (such as ballasts) or biomedical waste (such as syringes). Waste generated from businesses is not accepted.

To transport waste to a collection event, leave all products in their original containers. **Do not mix them together.** Make sure they are properly sealed and will not leak. You may bring up to five gallons or 50 pounds of waste at any one time. Use your best judgment to estimate the amounts.

For information on collection events, call the Household Hazardous Materials Program Hotline at **235-2111**. For information on used oil recycling options, call the Used Oil Infoline at **235-2105**.

Sponsored by  
The City of San Diego Environmental Services and  
Metropolitan Wastewater Departments and the  
California Integrated Waste Management Board.



THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

No. 1 OF A SERIES



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The City of San Diego Household Hazardous Materials Program

Household Hazardous Materials  
Program Hotline..... 235-2111  
(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 246-1233  
Used Oil Infoline..... 235-2105  
Recycling Hotline: Paper, Glass, Cans..... 467-0903  
(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 237-2583  
Paint for Graffiti Removal  
Paint Exchange Bank..... 527-3431  
(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 246-1233

The City of San Diego  
Household Hazardous Materials Program  
450 A Street, Suite 500  
San Diego, CA 92101

Health Information



Emergencies..... 911  
Poison Control Center..... 543-6000  
Indoor Air Pollution:  
American Lung Association..... 297-3901

Reporting Hazards

Air Emissions:  
Air Pollution Control District..... 694-3340  
Oil-Burning, Smoking Vehicles..... 1-(800)-28-SMOKE

Illegal dumping of hazardous waste:  
County Dept. of Environmental Health..... 338-2284  
Storm Water Pollution Hotline..... 533-3793

Pesticides:  
County Agricultural Commissioner..... 694-2739  
Internet: [www.sannet.gov/environmental-services/](http://www.sannet.gov/environmental-services/)

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